(a) whether Government have a proposal to liberalisation Gold Import Policy as recommended by Natarajan Committee Report;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof, and

(c) if the answer to part (a) above be in negative what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI RAMESHWAR THAKUR): (a) to (c) The Hon. Member is presumably referring to the Report of Rangarajan Committee on Gold Policy. The only recommendation of the Rangarajan Committee in respect of liberalisation of gold import was that the existing ceilings on the aggregate value of gold jewellery that could be imported under the Transfer of Residence Rules and Customs Baggage Rules by passengers who have resided abroad for more than one year should be enhanced and fixed in terms of quantity. The quantity recommended was 100 grams per person, both for female and male passengers. Government have not found it feasible to raise the limit and fix it in terms of weight because of problems of assessment in cases of studded jewellery. However, monetary limits for jewellery allowed to be imported by incoming passengers under the Baggage Rules, 1978 and Transfer of Residence Rules, 1978 have been raised recently from Rs. 1,500/- to Rs. 10,000/- for male passengers and from Rs. 3,000/- to Rs. 20,000/- for female passengers, on the basis of the comparative prices of gold prevailing in 1978 and current prices of gold.

Honouring Top Tax Payers in the country

2698. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any plan to honour and recognise top ranking tax payers in the country;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof;

(c) if the answer to part (a) above be in negative the manner in which Government plan to recognise such individuals to encourage more persons to pay more taxes; and

(d) whether it is a fact that some organisations had arranged for such honour in Bombay recently but the Income Tax Department gave very passive response inspite of ministers' support?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI RAMESHWAR THAKUR): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Question does not arise.

(c) The Government does not consider it expedient to honour and recognise such individuals who pay large amount of taxes.

(d) A function for this purpose was recently organised in Bombay by a non-official organisation but the Goverment was not officially associated with it.

Instructions on Issuing of Demand Drafts

2699. SHRI SYED SIBTEY RAZI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether some instructions have been issued to banks to issue Demand Drafts only to those people who have Saving Bank Accounts with the branch where request for such drafts is made;

(b) if so, the details thereof with names of banks covered under such instructions;

(c) whether such instructions also put some limitation on amount of demand drafts;

(d) if so, the details thereof with background for such step;

(e) whether such instructions have been well publicised for knowledge of general public through media; and

(f) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI DALBIR SINGH): (a) to (d) Reserve Bank of India have advised all public sector banks to ensure that bank drafts are issued

against cash to members of the public irrespective of the fact whether they have a bank account or not. This has been done to avoid hardship to the members of public especially to persons of lesser means who cannot afford to have bank account.

However, Reserve Bank of India have also advised all banks that demand drafts, mail transfers, telegraphic transfers and traveller cheques for Rs. 50,000/- and above should be issued by banks only by debit to customers' accounts and not against cash payments. This has been done to curb misuse of banking channels for violation of fiscal laws and evasion of taxes.

(e) and (f) Necessary advice in this regard has been given to all concerned.

Functioning of Foreign Banks in The Country

2700. SHRI ASHIS SEN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the foreign banks functioning in our country participate in the priority sector advances as applicable to Indian banks;

(b) whether Government are aware that some of these foreign banks i.e. Citibank (formerly Citibank of New York) and some others debit extraordinary services charges in case the deposit account balance fall below a certain amount;

(c) what is the minimum amount of deposit these banks have prescribed for opening/maintaining a Savings Bank and Fixed Deposit account; and

(d) whether Government are contemplating to put them on par with Indian commercial banks in the country in these respects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI DALBIR SINGH): (a) Foreign banks functioning in India participate in priority sector lending but lower targets are applicable in their case.

(b) Service charges are levied by foreign banks having regard to the facilities offered by them to their customers.

(c) RBI have reported that except Citibank, no foreign bank has prescribed a minimum amount for fixed deposits. The amount prescribed by Citibank has been raised to Rupees One lakh since May 1991. As regards savings bank accounts, the minimum balance prescribed by some foreign banks is as under:—

Name of Bank	Requirement of Minimum Balance in S.B. A/c.
Citibank	Rs. 1.00 lakh w.e.f. 14.09.91 (Rs. 5,000 for old account holders)
American Express	Rs. 2,000
Bank of America	Rs. 2,500
Standard Chartered Bank	Rs. 2,500 (Daily average balance for 6 months)

(d) Indian Banks Association (IBA) have framed ground rules and a code of ethics with a view to eliminating unhalthy competion and also to inculcate discipline among banks. But it is open to banks to make their rules in respect of minimum balance stricter than those recommended by IBA.

Transfer and postings of ICAS Officers

2701. SHRI JAGDISH PRASAD MATHUR: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the names of such officers of the Indian Cost Accounts Service (ICAS) who continue to be on one post, for more than the normal period of three to four years, with reasons therefor;

(b) the names of I.C.A.S. officers who were reposted to their earlier position only after a short gap of one to two years;

(c) the names of I.C.A.S. officers who